

Language OnLine: Communication in the Digital Era, aka LOL (LING 133)

Summer 2021, Session 1, TuTh 9:00am-12:30pm, Zoom

Prerequisites: None

INSTRUCTOR **Tom Roberts** (he/him)
rotom@ucsc.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday, 9:30-11am or by appointment

TEACHING ASST. **Lalitha Balachandran** (she/her)
lbalacha@ucsc.edu
Office Hours: Friday, 10am-11am

Important Links (also 'Important Links' under Pages on Canvas):

Removed for privacy

1 Course description

In the age of social media, much of communication, both professional and personal, happens online, a trend that has only been accelerated by the pandemic. But despite claims to the contrary, the internet has not destroyed language; rather, language is thriving in new, vibrant, and ever-changing ways online. How does the internet (with its acronyms, emojis, and memes) affect language, especially among digital natives? And do the same rules which govern language offline also constrain language online? The course will use the tools of linguistics, and in particular the tools of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, to explore many questions relating to internet and language including:

- Why do my parents end their texts with periods?
- Are emojis language?
- What makes a spicy meme?
- How has language changed because of the internet?
- In what ways is internet language different from, or similar to, offline language?

- How do online communities form? How do they relate to offline communities?
- What is the role of technology in online communication?
- How does the internet impact minoritized and marginalized communities and languages?

1.1 Topics

The course is organized into five modules, each (roughly) corresponding to 1 week of the course:

1. A brief history of the internet and internet language
2. Tone, discourse particles, and emojis
3. Memes and the pragmatics of virality
4. The sociolinguistics of digital spaces
5. The role of technology in shaping and mediating speech

2 Course requirements

All course assignments will be submitted on Canvas.

Reading Responses (24% of final grade; 3% each)

We will be reading a number of academic and non-academic texts in this course, and its likely you will find at least some of them challenging. Reading responses will help you actively engage with the material in class and think critically about the contents of the readings. A reading response consists of a very short summary of main points in the reading (no more than a paragraph), along with three questions or comments you have about it, submitted on Canvas. The total length of the response should be about 200-300 words. Responses are due for all required readings **one hour before class on the day that the readings are discussed**. Please consult the rubric for each response for guidance regarding what we are expecting.

Homework assignments (60% of final grade; 20% each) There will be three small projects over the course, each consisting of a a creative component and an analytical written component. The first project will involve describing the pragmatics of a linguistic trend of your choosing. The second will involve creating a meme, and the third will involve sociolinguistic analysis of a public social media account.

In-class participation reflections (16% of final grade; 1.6% each)

Attendance and participation in class are necessary to getting the most out of this course. It is also important that you come to class having done the readings and are prepared to ask any

questions or clarifications that will help us engage more deeply with the material. Every day in lecture, I will ask you to submit a short reflection (100 words) on what you got out of that day's meeting, to be submitted by the end of lecture. You are also encouraged to participate in the class Discord, though this is not part of your grade.

2.1 Final grades

The final grades for the class will be assigned according to the following percentages. For values on the boundary between two grades, I will default to the higher of the two (so 90% is an A-).

A+	≥97%	B+	87 - 90%	D	63 - 67%
A	93 - 97%	C+	77 - 80%	D-	60 - 63%
A-	90 - 93%	C	73 - 77%	F	<60%
B+	87 - 90%	C-	70 - 73%		
B	83 - 87%	D+	67 - 70%		

2.2 Late work policy

This is a summer course, so the pace will be more rapid than a normal course; the discussion-based nature of the course also means that staying on top of readings is a priority. That said, I understand that this a stressful and challenging time for many reasons, so I will allow late work, no questions asked, **provided that you let me know by email**, preferably in advance (though I recognize this is not always possible). You do not need to share personal details. I will not accept work which is submitted late without contacting me. If you need disability accommodations, see section 4 for instructions.

2.3 Materials

There is no textbook for the course, but there will be a number of readings, all of which will be available on Canvas. In addition, there will be a class Discord available for both discussion about the course and casual chit-chat (memes are welcome!!! it's an internet class!!!).

3 Collaboration & Academic Integrity

You are highly encouraged to discuss readings and homeworks with other students. However, the reading responses and assignments that you turn in must be written **entirely on your own**. There are no exceptions to this rule.

All incidents of suspected academic dishonesty (including copying someone else's work or allowing them to copy your work) will be pursued and may result in a Report of Academic Misconduct being filed with the student's provost. This can lead to disciplinary hearings with the Academic Tribunal. More information about these policies can be found here:

https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

4 Disability Accommodation

Any student who thinks they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to submit their Accommodation Authorization and discuss specific needs **within the first week of the session**. Please contact the Disability Resource Center at 831-459-2089 in room 146 Hahn Student Services or by e-mail at drc@ucsc.edu to coordinate those accommodations.

5 Getting Help

We want to make sure that everyone in the course has access to the resources they need to make it a success. Here are some of those ways:

- **Lecture:** You are always welcome—and in fact, encouraged—to ask questions during lecture and section!
- **Office Hours:** The instructor and TA have designated office hours when any student can drop by. You are strongly encouraged to make use of this opportunity. Possible valid uses of office hours included (but are by no means limited to):
 - Introducing yourself to the instructor
 - Asking specific questions about course material
 - Working through homework quietly and asking questions as needed

If you are not able to attend a regularly-scheduled office hour, you can always make an appointment by email.

- **Email:** You are also more than welcome to ask questions of the instructor or TA over email, and we will respond within 24 hours during the week. Email is best suited for questions which require only a short or limited answer. **Note:** We cannot guarantee an immediate response to an email outside of normal business hours (weekdays 9-5).
- **Discord:** You can also communicate with the instructors on Discord, publicly or privately.

6 Schedule

Readings labeled with a * and bolded are required reading (and correspond to a reading response). Other readings are optional, but relevant.

Module	Date	Reading	Assignments due
1	Tu 6/22	None	None
	Th 6/24	* McCulloch (2019), Ch. 3 McSweeney (2018), Ch. 1	RR #1
2	Tu 6/29	* Walther & D’Addario (2001)	RR #2
	Th 7/1 (<i>Guest lecture, Allison Nguyen, UCSC Psychology</i>)	* Gawne & McCulloch (2019) Kaiser & Grosz (2021)	RR #3
3	M 7/5		HW #1 (Fieldwork)
	Tu 7/6	* Shifman (2014) Ch. 3-6	
	Th 7/8	* Dancygier & Vandelanotte (2017)	RR #5
4	Tu 7/13	* Herring & Stoerger (2014)	RR #6
			HW #2 (Memes)
	Th 7/15	* Holliday & Tano (2021) Abreu (2015)	RR #7
5	Tu 7/20	* Gibson (2019)	RR #8
	Th 7/22	None	None
	F 7/23	None	HW #3 (Socio)

References

- Abreu, Manuel Arturo. 2015. Online Imagined Black English. *Arachne* (1).
- Dancygier, Barbara & Lieven Vandelanotte. 2017. Internet memes as multimodal constructions. *Cognitive Linguistics* 28(3). 565–598.
- Gawne, Lauren & Gretchen McCulloch. 2019. Emoji as digital gestures. *LanguageInternet* 17(2).
- Gibson, Anna. 2019. Free speech and safe spaces: How moderation policies shape online discussion spaces. *Social Media + Society* 5(1). 1–15.
- Herring, Susan C. & Sharon Stoerger. 2014. Gender and (a)nonymity in computer-mediated communication. In *The Handbook of Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, 567–586. Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Holliday, Nicole & Marie Tano. 2021. It’s a whole vibe: Testing evaluations of grammatical and ungrammatical AAE on Twitter. *Linguistics Vanguard* 7(1). 1–14.

- Kaiser, Elsi & Patrick Grosz. 2021. Anaphoricity in emoji: An experimental investigation of face and non-face emoji. In *Proceedings of the Linguistics Society of America Annual Meeting*, vol. 6 1, 1009–1023.
- McCulloch, Gretchen. 2019. *Because Internet: Understanding the new rules of language*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- McSweeney, Michelle A. 2018. *The Pragmatics of Text Messaging: Making Meaning in Messages*. New York: Routledge.
- Shifman, Limor. 2014. *Memes in digital culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Walther, Joseph B. & Kyle P. D’Addario. 2001. The impacts of emoticons on messaging interpretation in computer-mediated communication. *Social Science Computer Review* 19(3). 324–347.